

At fourth annual EcoDistricts Incubator, 12 teams to build roadmaps to sustainable neighborhood success

Twelve cities to join prestigious group of more than 30 alumni teams working to create just, sustainable and resilient cities and neighborhoods for all.

PORTLAND, April 27, 2015. EcoDistricts has announced the 12 city teams that will participate in its fourth annual EcoDistricts Incubator, to be held in Portland, OR, May 18-20.

The Incubator is a three-day intensive workshop designed to accelerate district-scale sustainability projects through the EcoDistricts approach. World-class faculty guides participants through one-on-one technical assistance, expert facilitation, tours, presentations, and work sessions. Project teams come with an identified project and have the authority and capacity to create change in the proposed district. Each team leaves with a customized and comprehensive EcoDistricts Roadmap for their project.

“Our approach is simple - deep and authentic sustainability in which the issues of social, cultural and ecological well being are identified and integrated into a powerful roadmap for neighborhoods,” said Rob Bennett, CEO of EcoDistricts. “With our fourth class of Incubator teams preparing to come to Portland in May, we can now count 43 projects and nearly 200 urban development leaders from across North America working to implement real change in their communities. We are grateful for their commitment and inspiration.”

The 2015 projects, listed below, are comprised of diverse neighborhoods representing 5,000 acres of redevelopment across North America, from business districts to economically stressed communities and from public health and institutional campuses to transit-oriented developments.

- Atlanta, GA—Neighborhood Planning Unit Y (NPU-Y) & Polar Rock, a 2400-acre collection of 11 underserved neighborhoods that has well-connected and green streets, a diverse group long-term residents, bus service, and undeveloped natural green-spaces. Investment is pouring into the NPU to accelerate projects like park restoration, a Complete Streets plan, and local fresh food markets, grocery stores and community gardens.
- Austin, TX—Central Health Brackenridge Campus, a 14-acre campus in a residential, ethnically diverse neighborhood in Central East Austin that is experiencing rapid growth. The campus is a vital community asset that provides health care for vulnerable populations, and redevelopment will include affordable housing and enhanced mobility options, support a medical school, new teaching hospital, and planned innovation zone.
- Birmingham, AL—Entrepreneurial District, an 86-acre plot of former railroad and industrial land that has laid in disuse since the collapse of the iron and steel industry. With the redevelopment of surrounding land into Railroad Park and a growing number of technology and knowledge industry businesses, the district has become the centerpiece of the City’s strategy for downtown revitalization.
- Burbank, CA—Burbank High-Speed Rail Station Area EcoDistrict, a 540-acre TOD of largely industrial land and the site of a future California High-Speed Rail (HSR) station. The site is rich with transit potential, but in need of facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users as well as development that encourages sustainable design, a healthy ecology, and job and housing creation.
- Fort Collins, CO—The Mason UniverCity District, a 1165-acre area along the Mason Street corridor that connects downtown Fort Collins and the Colorado State University main campus. Leaders are developing an EcoDistrict master plan for the UniverCity District that aims to create a unique character and identity that incorporates artistic features, improves alleyways and parking, reduces development barriers, and incorporates robust biodiversity.
- Grand Forks, ND—Warehouse EcoDistrict and Grand Corridor Project, a 9-acre area adjacent to downtown Grand Forks that includes the 5-acre Warehouse EcoDistrict and the Grand Corridor Project, a 4-mile rapid transit corridor. The Warehouse EcoDistrict is the first phase of a project to connect people, jobs, and activity through a development corridor that includes affordable housing, recreation, mixed-use development, and light rail and pedestrian-friendly transit.

- Oakland, CA: Jack London Improvement District, a 216-acre unique mixed-use urban community on Oakland's historic waterfront. The District is jointly funded by all property owners and has District Ambassadors that promote safety and beautification in the area. The District has adopted 15 projects that include maintenance and beautification, land use and transportation, and marketing and economic development.
- Rochester, NY: High Falls EcoDistrict, a 210-acre revitalization effort of several disparate riverfront districts, each with its own characteristics and demographic makeup. Rochester recently became a Climate Smart Community, and with a new community college campus, a sports complex, an innovation center, a new greenway and a growing residential influx, High Falls will benefit from a progressive urban plan and investments that will create a new sense of destination.
- The Rockaways, New York, NY: Resilient Rockaways, a peninsula of approximately 4,500 acres and one of the communities hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Planning leaders have already implemented community engagement and visioning strategies to address and improve the resilience of the community to the effects of climate change, as well as job creation, public health, and public transit.
- San Francisco, CA: Sustainable Chinatown Initiative, a 24-block historic neighborhood. Among Chinatown's assets are its incredible density and its role as an immigrant gateway, cultural mecca, and tourist destination. The Sustainable Chinatown Initiative will engage immigrant and monolingual communities to identify strategies that sustain Chinatown's unique culture and affordability while increasing its environmental performance.
- St. Louis, MO: Near North Side St. Louis (NNS), a 20-acre distressed neighborhood, located just north of downtown St. Louis, with low income rates, poor public health, high long-term vacancy, violent crime rates, and underachieving schools. The area was awarded a \$500,000 Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop a Transformation Plan that will promote projects to address these issues in the neighborhood, which serves as the primary gateway to downtown St. Louis.
- Victoria, BC, Canada: Food Eco District (FED), a 40-acre district located in the heart of downtown Victoria. The FED is focused on urban agriculture projects that beautify the neighborhood, attract tourists and raise awareness about locally sourced food, as well as long-term projects like increasing membership, bike kitchens, public green spaces, district energy and composting, roof gardens and a food truck/biofuel initiative.

Since 2012, EcoDistricts has trained 31 projects in 26 cities on the EcoDistricts approach. Reports for past Incubators can be found at <http://ecodistricts.org/training/incubator/>, where you also will find a series of success stories about the outcomes of past Incubator projects. For example, Detroit Future City launched eco-D, a technical assistance program offered to Detroit neighborhoods to help create sustainability plans for their communities based on the EcoDistricts model. Pittsburgh's Uptown Eco Innovation District team released an RFQ to officially jumpstart master planning for their ecodistrict. And San Francisco has made tremendous progress on the SoMa EcoDistrict and created a citywide EcoDistrict Framework.

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About EcoDistricts

EcoDistricts is a Portland, Oregon, based nonprofit organization dedicated to just, sustainable and resilient cities and neighborhoods for all. EcoDistricts provides support and leadership for urban change makers and innovators to accelerate sustainable district and neighborhood scale regeneration. To learn more, visit ecodistricts.org.

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